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FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7861  
INFO RUEHZH/HAITI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 1834  
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 1639  
RUEHQU/AMCONSUL QUEBEC PRIORITY 1062  
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J2 MIAMI FL PRIORITY  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1457

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 000399

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR WHA/EX AND WHA/CAR  
G/TIP FOR BFLECK  
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SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD  
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR  
INR/IAA  
WHA/EX PLEASE PASS USOAS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [HA](#)

SUBJECT: GOH CHILDREN'S SHELTER WELL RUN, POLITICS ASIDE

REF: A. PORT-AU-PRINCE 336

[B](#). 07 PORT-AU-PRINCE 1668

[C](#). 07 PORT-AU-PRINCE 437

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[1](#). Summary. A large GOH children,s shelter near Port-au-Prince, once run by Jean Bertrand Aristide before he became President, is now managed by Brother Armand Franklin, a reputed Aristide ally, and is doing well with the help of international assistance. The shelter, the largest GOH institution for needy children, is well managed, and the lives of the children who live there are unquestionably better than those who live on the streets in Port-au-Prince. Poloff was unable to confirm rumors that Brother Armand Franklin intends to follow Aristide,s example and launch a political career using the children,s shelter as a platform.  
End summary.

[2](#). Poloff on February 28 made an unannounced visit to the Carrefour Welcome Center, a GOH children's shelter in Carrefour that recently completed renovations and that figures in the 2007 and 2008 TIP report (reftels A and C). (Note: Carrefour is a poor, high-crime suburb of Port-au-Prince. End note.) Brother Armand Franklin, who many Port-au-Prince residents believe supports former President Jean Bertrand Aristide, runs the shelter. Many in the area suspect that Brother Armand intends to use the orphanage as the platform for a political movement, similar to the way Aristide used the same institution to found his Selavie youth group that helped launch his political career (reftel B). The GOH owns the orphanage complex, also known as La Centrale, but allows a Haitian Catholic group, The Little Brothers and Sisters of the Incarnation, to operate it.

[3](#). According to Dr. Eliodor Clervil, executive co-director of the shelter and the president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the Center Department, the shelter's purpose is to provide a safe haven for street children, ages 5-20, where they can also receive food and educational opportunities. At the time of Poloff,s visit, the shelter housed 120 boys and 3 girls. (Note: The girls were to be transferred to an affiliated shelter named Dos Palais, located in Hinche in the Center Department. That shelter housed 150 children, of which 60 were girls. The third

shelter is Petit Place Cazeau. Brother Armand's congregation runs all three shelters and owns outright the Hinche and Cazeau facilities. End note.)

¶4. Even though the Carrefour shelter does not accept children with criminal problems, Clervil noted that it remained difficult to place children in families. To provide guidance and role models for the children, the shelter divides the children into smaller groups and appoints two adults who live with them as group parents.

¶5. The purpose of Poloff's visit was to check the status of renovations mentioned in post's submission for the seventh annual trafficking in persons report (reftel C). The renovations were completed, but Clervil claimed that a second phase of the renovations, which included building extensions to existing buildings, was underway. The focus of this second stage is to improve living conditions for the group parents and other staff residing at the shelter, and to build a new kitchen, funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). IDB funding also underwrites the meals that the children receive.

¶6. Comment: The stark contrast between the shelter and the surrounding neighborhood is instantly noticeable. The shelter was clean and orderly, and the children appeared well-nourished and happy. The shelter, which can easily house more than its current 120 residents, is a large facility. It contained spacious but poorly equipped classrooms and ample space for physical exercise. The dormitories are large, airy, and filled with sunlight. Poloff noticed that each child received a generous helping of the simple lunch of rice and beans. The shelter could benefit from additional desks, books, small storage closets for the children, and a better water purification system.

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¶7. Comment continued: The shelter's compound has a long political history. President Dumarsais Estime (1946-1950) founded the shelter to house delinquent teenagers. Francois Duvalier, then the Minister of Social Affairs, turned over the facility to the Port-au-Prince Archdiocese, who entrusted it to the Catholic congregation of the Fathers and Brothers of the Holy Spirit. The priests and brothers ran La Centrale until 1964 when President Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier expelled the congregation from Haiti. Duvalier and his son, Jean Claude Duvalier, used the facility during their regimes to house political prisoners, but the GOH, after the fall of Jean Claude, turned over the compound to Aristide, who reconstituted the children's shelter there as a platform to launch his political career. While we could not confirm widely believed rumors that Brother Armand Franklin plans to use this children's center to develop a political career, he is very adept at running multiple large facilities (the three shelters and the Pandiasou peasant support organization ) see reftel B), and is able to attract and manage funds from various international donors.

SANDERSON